

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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P R 191353Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO 9/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8344
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 3372

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT MOPS LE
SUBJ: PHALANGE SEEKS TO NEUTRALIZE SYRIAN WRATH AFTER FRANJIYAH
ASSASSINATION

REF: BEIRUT 3271

1. SUMMARY: PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT PIERRE GEMAYEL IS
LOOKING FOR WAYS TO NEUTRALIZE POSSIBLE SYRIAN
REACTION AGAINST THE PHALANGE FOR THE TONY FRANJIYAH
ASSASSINATION, BUT THAT HE (PAKRADOUNI) IS NOT GOING
TO HELP. AMINE GEMAYEL CLAIMS HE WAS UNAWARE OF OPERATION
AND IS REVOLTED BY IT. BACHIR GEMAYEL HAS TAKEN
PRECAUTIONS, BUT CLAIMS TO BE CONFIDENT NORTHERNERS
PRESENT NO THREAT TO HIM. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET WITH KARIM PAKRADOUNI, PHALANGE
POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER, JUNE 16. HE SEEMED STILL IN
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THE PROCESS OF SORTING OUT IN HIS OWN MIND WHAT
WERE REPERCUSSIONS OF THE TONY FRANJIYAH ASSASSINATION
FOR LEBANON AND FOR THE PHALANGE PARTY. HE IS MORE
CONVINCED THAN EVER THAT BACHIR GEMAYEL PLANNED AND
DIRECTED THE OPERATION (SEE FURTHER BELOW), WITH THE
FULL KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT OF PIERRE GEMAYEL.

3. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEETING OF JUNE 15 HAD FOCUSED ENTIRELY ON QUESTION OF HOW THE SYRIANS MIGHT REACT TO THE ASSASSINATION. PIERRE GEMAYEL SPOKE AT LENGTH INDICATING SOME FEAR THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD REACT AGAINST THE PHALANGE AND OF THE NECESSITY TO POLITICALLY CONTAIN THIS THREAT. FOLLOWING SHEIKH PIERRE, JOSEPH ABOU KHALIL, A CLOSE SUPPORTER OF PIERRE, SPOKE OF HOW TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A STRATEGY. AT FIRST, ABOU KHALIL RULED OUT RECOURSE TO THE PHALANGE COMMITTEE ON SYRIAN RELATIONS, SAYING THE MATTER WAS TOO DELICATE. INSTEAD KHALIL PROPOSED THAT KARIM PAKRADOUNI UNDERTAKE TO VISIT DAMASCUS ALONE.

4. PAKRADOUNI TOOK THE FLOOR. BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION PAKRADOUNI SAID (AS HE HAD SAID HE WOULD AT EARLIER MEETING WITH EMBOFF - REFTTEL), THAT THE POLITICAL BUREAU WAS COMPLETELY IGNORANT OF THE OPERATION AGAINST IHDIN BEFORE IT TOOK PLACE AND HAD NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT, ALTHOUGH POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBERS MIGHT SUFFER ON ACCOUNT OF IT. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE ARGUED AGAINST A MISSION TO SYRIA AT THIS TIME FOR TWO REASONS: FIRST, THERE WAS NO PARTICULAR NEED. THERE WAS NOTHING THAT THE SYRIANS HAD DONE TO PROVOKE COMPLAINTS BY THE PHALANGE IN RECENT WEEKS. SECONDLY, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, ANY EFFORT CONFIDENTIAL

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TO CONVINCE THE SYRIANS THAT THE PHALANGE WAS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF TONY FRANJIYAH WOULD BE A LIE, AND IN MORE PRACTICAL TERMS, SIMPLY WOULD NOT BE BELIEVED. PAKRADOUNI CONCLUDED BY STATING CATEGORICALLY THAT HE JUST WOULDN'T GO. HE SAID THE MEETING ENDING WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL SAYING THAT HE KNEW THAT KARIM PAKRADOUNI WAS A LOYAL PHALANGE MEMBER AND WOULD CONTINUE TO SERVE THE PARTY TO THE BEST OF HIS ABILITY. THERE WAS LITTLE OTHER DISCUSSION.

5. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE TALKED BRIEFLY WITH BACHIR GEMAYEL AFTER THE MEETING. BACHIR ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT THE FUTURE HELD: HOW WOULD SULIEMAN FRANJIYAH NOW REACT? PAKRADOUNI SAID HE TOLD BACHIR DIRECTLY THAT SULIEMAN FRANJIYAH WOULD KILL HIM. BACHIR SAID HE THOUGHT THAT WAS NOT LIKELY, AND, IN ANY CASE, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, PAKRADOUNI NOTED BACHIR HAD MOVED HIS WIFE AND THEIR NEWBORN DAUGHTER TO THE GEMAYEL VILLAGE OF BIKFAYA.

6. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE MET WITH AMINE GEMAYEL EVENING OF JUNE 15. (AMINE HAD NOT ATTENDED POLITICAL

BUREAU MEETING.) AMINE HAD PROFESSED TO PAKRADOUNI THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY UNAWARE OF THE OPERATION AGAINST IHDIN BEFORE IT HAPPENED, AND WAS REVOLTED AND DISGUSTED BY IT. WHAT TO DO NOW? PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD SUGGESTED TO AMINE THAT, IF HE (AMINE) WOULD LEAVE THE PARTY, HE (PAKRADOUNI) WOULD FOLLOW SUIT.

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7. POSSIBLE SYRIAN REACTION. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD NOT BEEN IN A TOUCH WITH DAMASCUS LATELY, BUT HE HAD NOTICED IN THE SYRIAN PRESS SINCE THE ASSASSINATION THAT THE SYRIANS WERE SAYING THEY WOULD NOT BE DRAWN INTO A TRAP IN LEBANON. HE INFERRED FROM THIS THAT THE SYRIANS HAD ALREADY TAKEN A BASIC DECISION TO NOT GO TO WAR AGAINST THE PHALANGE ON BEHALF OF THE ZGHARTAWIS. HOWEVER, THE ATTITUDE OF RIF'AT AL ASSAD, THE PRESIDENT'S BROTHER, WAS A DIFFERENT MATTER. RIF'AT HAD BEEN VERY CLOSE TO TONY FRANJIYAH, AND HAD VOWED TO AVENGE HIS DEATH. RIF'AT RAN AN INTELLIGENCE NETWORK IN LEBANON, AND HAD A FAIR NUMBER OF HIS OWN TROOPS IN BEIRUT. RIF'AT WOULD ASSIST THE ZGHARTAWIS IN DISPOSING OF BACHIR.

8. MARONITE OPINION. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD

ATTENDED A LARGE PARTY OF ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY
GRADUATES THE PREVIOUS EVENING AND HAD SOUNDED
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OUT PEOPLE PRESENT ON WHAT THEY THOUGHT OF THE
ASSASSINATION. JSHE HAD DISCOVERED THAT THERE WAS A
CERTAIN BASIC SYMPATHY AMONG THE EDUCATED MIDDLE-
CLASS MARONITE GROUP FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF TONY
FRANJIYAH, WHO IS REGARDED IN EAST BEIRUT GENERALLY
AS AN ENEMY, BUT CONSIDERABLE REVULSION AT THE
ASSASSINATION OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER. PEOPLE HAD,
HOWEVER, NOT REALIZED FULLY THE CONSEQUENCES.
WHEN HE HAD POINTED OUT THAT ZGHARTIWIS WERE GOING
TO TAKE THEIR REVENGE, THAT "THIS IS THE BEGINNING
OF THE MARONITE CIVIL WAR," PEOPLE WERE SHOCKED
AND BEGAN TO HAVE SECOND THOUGHTS. PAKRADOUNI THOUGHT
THERE WAS A CERTAIN AWE AMONG THE MARONITE POPULA-
TION OF THE GEMEJYELS: "NOBODY IS GOING TO SPEAK
AGAINST THEM."

9. GOL ROLE. PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED
THE ASSASSINATION BRIEFLY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS
THE PRECEDING DAY. HE SAID THAT BOUTROS BELIEVED
THAT BACHIR GEMAYEL HAD DIRECTED THE OPERATION WITH
THE FULL COGNIZANCE OF HIS FATHER PIERRE, BUT THAT
PRESIDENT SARKIS SIMPLY REFUSED TO BELIEVE THAT PIERRE
GEMAYEL HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT. PAKRADOUNI
SAID THAT THIS DEMONSTRATED THE WEAKNESS OF THE
GOVERNMENT'S INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM - APPARENTLY,
PRESIDENT SARKIS HAD NO GOOD INFORMATION ON WHAT WAS
BEING SAID IN THE PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU AND IN
THE MILITIA LEADERSHIP. IF ONLY FOR THIS REASON,
PAKRADOUNI SAID HE HOPED TO SEE THE PRESIDENT
WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. (HE HAD NOT SEEN HIM FOR
THE LAST TWO WEEKS).

10. DETAILS OF THE OPERATION. REFERRING TO VARIOUS
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WRITTEN NOTES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, PAKRADOUNI
VOLUNTEERED THE FOLLOWING FURTHER DETAILS ON
THE IHDIN OPERATION ITSELF: IN ADDITION TO BACHIR,
ALFRED MADY AND FOUD ROUKOUZ, PHALANGE MILITARY
COUNCIL MEMBER DIB ANASTAS HAD ASSISTED IN PLANNING
THE OPERATION. IN ADDITION TO ELIE ZAYEK, ONE JOSEPH
AL-ASWAD HAD LED THE OPERATION IN THE FIELD. ZAYEK

HEADED THE COLUMN WHICH CAME UP TO IHDIN FROM BATROUN, AND AL-ASWAD, AIDED BY SAMIR JA-JA, LED THE ELEMENT FROM BECHARRE. BOTH ZAYEK AND AL-ASWAD, PAKRADOUNI SAID, HAD TAKEN COMMANDO TRAINING COURSES IN ISRAEL. JA'JA, PAKRADOUNI SAID, WAS FROM BECHARRE, BUT WAS NOT AN SKS MEMBER. AFTER JA'JA WAS WOUNDED DURING THE FIGHT INSIDE TONY FRANJIYAH'S HOUSE, HE WAS REPLACED BY EDMOND SAHYOUN. AT THE VERY LEAST, THE FOUR PLANNERS OF THE OPERATION AND THE TWO COLUMN COMMANDERS KNEW BEFORE THE OPERATION BEGAN THAT ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE WAS TO KILL TONY FRANJIYAH.

11. COMMENT: PAKRADOUNI MAY NOT BE QUITE AS WELL INFORMED AS HE THINKS HE IS (THERE IS ONE REPORT THAT HE WAS EXCLUDED FROM ONE KEY MEETING OF THE POLITICAL BUREAU), BUT HE IS CERTAINLY IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ALL THE LEADERS OF THE PHALANGE PARTY. THE SHOCK OF THE IHDIN OPERATION IS APPARENTLY STILL SINKING INTO THE MINDS OF THE PHALANGE LEADERSHIP, AND THERE IS CONSIDERABLE TACIT CRITICISM OF BACHIR AND PIERRE GEMAYEL. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THIS DISAFFECTION WILL HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THE GEMAYEL CONTROL OF THE PARTY.

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